



The Science of Sleeplessness

Astronautalis doesn't sleep. He has been touring relentlessly for the past seven years. Son of a bar-fighting Texas trainman and a Kentucky woman who ran away from home to chase her dream of photography, Astro seems born and bred for the road life. His music has evolved as dramatically as he has over the years, and he's found a habitat in the place between scenes.

For Astro, it all started out with battle rap, an aggressive medium that at its best pits wit against wit and at its worst sounds like two idiots in the beginning stages of aggravated assault. Competing at Scribble Jam, one of the nation's premier battle-rap contests, Astro cut his teeth in the realm of backpacker hip hop. From there, his style transformed into the sound he now creates. Take Slug's (from Atmosphere) cadence, mix it with The Mars Volta, and that's close to what Astro is now putting out.

Astronautalis is a writer's MC, cut from the cloth of Sage Francis, Aceyalone or Prevail. For example, try finding another rapper who has written a song about the Battle of Trenton. What Aceyalone did with *The Book of Human Language* or Prevail did on *Balance*, Astronautalis has done with his newest album, *This is Our Science* – but Astro is pushing literary hip hop with an indie-rock aesthetic, and it sounds great.

This is Our Science comes fully loaded with help from Astro's accomplished peers Cecil Otter (Wugazi), POS (Rhymesayers), as well as indie-rock sensation Tegan & Sara. It is Astro's most autobiographical album to date, and it flawlessly interweaves hip-hop vocals with rock-style chorus and song. There are even moments when the guitar riffs and Astro's verse sound reminiscent of a younger Anthony Kiedis, right around when the Chili Peppers vocalist was hanging out with hip-hop innovator Kool Keith.

Live, Astronautalis often pays homage to his hip-hop roots by freestyling on topics thrown out to him by audience members. For an impressive display of Astro's talent, check out his song "Mr. Blessington's Imperialist Plot" on YouTube.

Astronautalis plays 9 pm Saturday, Oct. 8, at WOW Hall; \$10 adv., \$12 door. – *Dante Zuñiga-West*

The Da Vinci Codex

Great art doesn't happen in a vacuum. History shows that even when artists rise to immortality, overshadowing others of their time and place, many were nevertheless part of an artistic community. These communities often contained practitioners of multiple art forms, which made for a very rich creative atmosphere. There's no question that Leonardo Da Vinci lived in a remarkable time and place – Renaissance Florence and Rome – that fielded one of history's most fertile artistic cultures, boasting the likes of Michelangelo, Botticelli and Raphael.

But what about musicians? Along with being a painter, inventor and engineer, Da Vinci was also a musician who painted portraits of musicians and designed musical instruments – he partook in the sounds of great Renaissance music and dance. The **Toronto Consort** will bring some of those sounds to UO's Beall Concert Hall on Wednesday, Oct. 12.

The group, which includes superb singers as well as lutenist, flutist, guitarist, keyboard, recorder and percussion players, has won acclaim for four decades, and scored soundtracks like *The Sweet Hereafter*. The Toronto Consort's theme-oriented programming draws audiences interested not just in music but also in history. In fact, they'll present a similarly themed program, focusing on the music of Shakespeare's time, at Oregon State University's Music a la Carte Series at noon, Oct. 14 in Corvallis. The Toronto Consort will repeat the Da Vinci program at Western Oregon University in Monmouth during the evening of Oct. 14 and play at Portland's Marylhurst University on Oct. 13.

The Toronto Consort performs *The Da Vinci Codex* 8 pm, Wednesday, Oct. 12, at Beall Concert Hall; \$8-\$10. – *Brett Campbell*

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